DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 077 050 CS 500 273

AUTHOR Stone, John D.
TITLE Conceptual Divisions Within the Speech Communication Association.
PUB DATE Dec 72
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Assn. (Chicago, December 1972)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Communication (Thought Transfer); Information Theory; *Linguistics; Mass Media; *Oral Communication; *Psychology; *Speech; Verbal Communication
IDENTIFIERS SCA; *Speech Communication Association

ABSTRACT

This paper specifically discusses the differing methods by which certain conceptual divisions in the field cf speech communication have been determined. Classifying the various conceptual approaches as (1) definitional analyses, (2) structural approaches, (3) research classifications, and (4) approaches reflecting a combination of these three, the author briefly reviews the major contributions made by speech professionals which establish some outline cf the conceptual concerns of the discipline. He provides a detailed examination of the efforts of the national association, the cataloging system devised by Borden, and the SCA information retrieval system (SCAIRS), enumerating the divisional concerns stated by each. (LG)

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CONCEPTUAL DIVISIONS WITHIN THE SPEECH COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION

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John D. Stone
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, Pennsylvania
December, 1972

CS 500 273

Conceptual Divisions Within the Speech Communication Association

Introduction

Nearly sixty years ago, in this very city, the first meeting of what has become the Speech Communication Association was held.[1] Most surely, the 17 charter members of the foundling association (then called the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking) attending the meeting represented quite diverse backgrounds and interests. Still, the development of the National Association did not come about in a vacuum nor was its establishment without ample forewarning.[2] For some time, the "founders" had spoken of interests that were somewhat different from those expressed by any organization of which they were then members. Since that time, on several occasions, speech scholars have undertaken to define such differences; to determine "what they are about." This paper is not an attempt to define the overall field of speech communication or any one of its respective divisions--its author does not feel competent to accomplish such an end. This paper will, however, discuss differing methods by which certain conceptual divisions in the field of speech communication have been determined.

The Scope of the Discipline

It seems justifiable to conclude that all academic disciplines are "built upon" certain conceptual constructs. Most surely, such basic and fundamental principles in the fields of literature, chemistry, history, biology, economics, etc., are, at least to some extent, evident to scholars in these areas. In efforts to realize the expressed intent of this paper by enumerating such conceptual divisions as they exist in speech communication, it has become increasingly apparent that such attempts in any discipline are, at their very outset, doomed to failure. In this preface to the 1966 report of the International

Symposium on Communication Theory and Research, Thayer perhaps unknowingly identified a major difficulty in accomplishing such a task in human communication when he observed:

> The phenomena of human communication are no respecters of traditional disciplinary ties. Whenever one studies human communication from the perspective of his own discipline, he soon finds himself at an impasse; the corpus he wants to comprehend streches perversely, indeterminately across many fields of study in the life and behavioral sciences and the applied arts. The head or the tail, or some other vital part of what he wants to understand, lies somewhere else--sometimes beyond his own communicative reach. Or it lies along the often great cultural boundaries which divide one way of seeing the world from another.[3]

That "the phenomena" of human communication is such that it "streches perversely, indeterminately across many fields of study" is most surely attested to by this author as he lists the disciplines from which various contributions to this conference emanated. Such a listing included the following:

linguistics
social psychology
psychology
educational research
literary theory
child development
theorectical sociology
physics
communication theory
speech
journalism
human factors
neurophysiology
mass communication
psychiatry
comparative sociology
military information systems
information technology[4]

Scholars from such diverse backgrounds have, according to Barker and Kibler, "classified the aspects of communication in a multitude of different ways."[5] Awareness of such differing views of speech communication recently led Borden to reach an increasingly apparent conclusion. In 1965, after considering the multidisciplinary nature of human communication, this author admitted

"it is impossible to find a single set of mutually exclusive categories that are definitive and meaningful."[6]

Such apparent "impossibilities" it would seem, might well deter members of the speech communication profession from attempting to "conceptualize" their discipline. Quite the contrary, however, appears to be true, for evidence of a number of such attempts appears in several forms. Such efforts are, at the same time, quite readily accessible and deserve consideration in this discussion.

Establishing Conceptual Divisions

Several writers have suggested a number of "means" by which one might examine the "business of communication." Although all such means could be considered "conceptual approaches," they are quite different in the forms they have chosen to take. For immediate purposes, such approaches will be arbitrarily classified as (1) definitional analyses, (2) sectional or structural approaches, (3) research classifications, and (4) approaches reflecting a combination of the above.

Notable efforts in the area of definition, although not directly attempting to discern the specific parameters of the discipline, have alluded to the conceptual divisions within speech communication. Quite a thorough discussion of such attempts is presented by Dance,[7] accompanied by an explanation of the conceptual components upon which such definitions critically divide. In addition, the author discusses the process of conceptualizing by the profession (of speech communication) and the advisability of looking toward the investigation and eventual establishment of a "family of concepts" which "should also facilitate the treatment of communication in a systems fashion."[8]

More specifically, one should take note of the discussions provided by Cartier and Harwood,[9] Miller,[10] Gerbner,[11] Newman,[12] Goyer,[13] Platt,[14] and others.

Such material will indeed provide ample background for the reader interested in definitional (and indirectly conceptual) attempts to provide divisions within the speech communication profession.

Perhaps the most prominent approach taken by those interested in conceptualizing the "communication business" by means of an overall look at the profession, is found in the works of those who have "outlined" the profession. Such recent efforts as those of Reid[15] and Brooks[16] most surely deserve to be considered, as do the expressions of the S. A. A. Committee on the Nature of the Field of Speech,[17] a symposium of "elder statesman of the SAA" speaking on the question of what is speech?[18] as well as an overview prepared by Karl Wallace in 1953.[19] Although each of these statements directs itself toward the analysis of the overall profession, the results are quite different and enlightening for one interested in determining what it is we are about and the conceptual concerns of the discipline.

The National Association, too, has made significant and meaningful efforts in the "sectional or structural areas" to classify the concerns of its membership. One need only take note of the convention program of recent SAA or SCA meetings to become aware of such efforts, which, it is felt, are somewhat reflected by the very divisional interests of the association.

Although the list of interest groups has recently been reduced from 21 to 9, such groups are felt to include the major divisions of conceptual concern within the discipline. They are:

Forensics
Instructional Development
Interpersonal and Small Group Interaction
Interpretation
Mass Communication
Public Address
Rhetorical and Communication Theory
Speech Science
Theatre[20]

Not unlike earlier programs, special "Boards, Committees, and Commissions" are mentioned along with Related Organizations and "Special Programs and Series."[21]

Four major attempts have been suggested as means by which members might classify (suggestive again of conceptual frameworks) the research of the speech discipline. While admitting the relative impossibility of a static structure, Borden attempted to develop a dynamic "cataloging system" in which one could place research materials found in speech communication. An outline of the initial system appears as follows:

Cataloging System[22]

Type #1
- A. General
- B. Specific

Type #2
- A. Verbal
- B. Non-verbal

Type #3
- A. Human
- B. Animal
- C. Mechanical

Type #4
- A. Empirical
- B. Semantic
- C. Perception
- D. Thought
- E. Learning
- F. Effect

Type #5
- A. Linguistic
- B. Semantic
- C. Perception
- D. Thought
- E. Learning
- F. Effect

Type #6
- A. Physiological
- B. Neurological
- C. Psychological

The author goes on to explain each of these "types" very briefly, while admitting there may not be a "division in each type" for a given article. He concluded by suggesting that no system can hope to encompass or categorize the entire scope of the discipline.[23]

Highly significant efforts by other authors have done much in the area of categorizing the research materials published by scholars in speech communication. Most members of the profession are surely aware of the monumental works prepared by Knower[24] and the accompanying effort by Dunham, Harms, and Gregg.[25] Substantial work in the same area has recently been completed by Matlon and Matlon[26] in their successful effort to update the cataloging of materials in seven of the major speech journals. An effort to classify the research materials published by the Journal of Communication has been suggested by Frandsen in the form of the Author and Key-Word Index.[27] It should be noted that each of the aforementioned approaches to the classification of the research materials appearing in the various "speech" journals, is a step in the direction of providing conceptual frameworks of the subject matter of speech communication--even though such may not have been the primary intention.

Finally, mention should be made of the Speech Communication Association Information Retrieval System (SCAIRS).[28] During the winter of 1967, the Executive Committee of the Speech Association of America, in response to a recommendation of the Research Board, appointed an Ad Hoc Committee on Information Retrieval to explore the concept of information retrieval as it relates to the theoretical and professional concerns of the membership. In March of 1969, that committee took the first steps toward the development of such an information retrieval system.[29]

In the preparation of such a system, it was decided, a number of things were necessary. Since the thesaurus was an attempt to classify the materials

found in the three national speech journals, the four regional journals, and two quite closely-related publications, attempts were made to supply authors of all articles appearing in these journals in the last three years, abstract and key-word forms.[30] With such information, it was possible to commence preparation of the cataloging of articles, abstracts and key-words by which such materials could later be retrieved.[31] Thus, consturction of the thesaurus was begun. The "external structure" of the general thesaurus resembles an outline of communication concepts. Such concepts are presently organized "under" thirteen major facet headings. Such headings are as follows:

Cognitive Processes
Communication Theory
Criticism
Culture
Education
Expression
General Semantics
Knowledge
Mass Communication
Pedagogy
Research
Rhetorical Theory
Speech Communication[32]

Each of the foregoing facets is then further "broken down" into subfacets, associated with norrow and broad terms, and referenced with related terms. This particular approach might best be demonstrated through analysis of an example taken directly from the pages of the thesaurus. (Although space does not allow the complete review of a particualr facet, a <u>portion</u> of a particular facet will be offered.)

COGNITIVE PROCESSES
    ATTITUDE
        ATTITUDE CHANGE
            BELIEFE-DISCREPANT SPEECH
            CLOSED-MINDEDNESS
            COMMITMENT
            EGO-INVOLVEMENT
            EXPOSURE THEORY
            LATITUDE OF ACCEPTANCE, REJECTION, NONCOMMITMENT
            OPEN-MINDEDNESS

ATTITUDINAL FRAME OF REFERENCE
- AUTHORITARIANISM
- BELIEF SYSTEMS
  - FAMILY INFLUENCE
  - IDEOLOGY
    - AGNOSTICISM
    - ATHEISM
    - COMMUNISM
    - DEMOCRACY
    - NATIONALISM
    - NAZISM
    - SOCIALISM
    - ZEN
  - SOCIAL NORMS
    - CIVIL RIGHTS
      - FREEDOM OF SPEECH
      - INTEGRATION
      - SLAVERY
    - CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR
    - DELINQUENCY
    - DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN
    - MINORITIES
    - OBSCENITY
  - VALUES
- CLOSED-MINDEDNESS[33]

Such an approach to the literature of the discipline does more than just connect concepts with the articles in which they may be found. It does more than establish a system by which one is able to retrieve desired information contained in a given article or set of articles. It actually attempts to conceptually structure the research materials within the nine aforementioned journals. In so doing, SCAIRS has offered a preliminary conceptual framework from which speech communication might well be viewed.

Perhaps there have been other attempts to conceptually organized the discipline of speech-communication. Undoubtedly, the future should produce even more refined methods. The preceding discussion has been an effort to briefly review certain diverse means it was felt made such an attempt.

FOOTNOTES

[1]J.M. O'Neill, "The National Association," The Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking, I, No. 1 (April, 1915), pp. 51-58.

[2]For historical reference see: Giles Wilkeson Gray, "Some Teachers and the Transition to Twentiety-Century Speech Education," pp. 422-446; Donald K. Smith, "Origin and Development of Departments of Speech," pp. 447-470, in Karl R. Wallace, Ed., History of Speech Education in America (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954).

[3]Lee Thayer, Ed., Communication: Concepts and Perspectives (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1967), p. iii.

[4]Lee Thayer, Ed., Communication: Theory and Research (Proceedings of the First International Symposium), Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, Publishers, 1967), p. vii.

[5]Larry L. Barker and Robert J. Kibler, Eds., Speech Communication Behavior: Perspectives and Principles, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), p. 3.

[6]George A. Borden, "Current Developments in Communications Research," Journal of Communication, XV (2), (June, 1965), pp. 110-117.

[7]Frank E. X. Dance, "The 'Concept' of Communication," The Journal of Communication, XX (June, 1970), pp. 201-210.

[8]Ibid., p. 210.

[9]F.A. Cartier and K.A. Harwood, "On Definition of Communication," The Journal of Communication, III (November, 1953), pp. 71-75.

[10]Gerald R. Miller, "On Defining Communication: Another Stab," The Journal of Communication, XVI (June, 1966), pp. 88-98.

[11]George Gerbner, "On Defining Communication: Still Another View," The Journal of Communication, XVI (June, 1966), pp. 99-103.

[12]John B. Newman, "A Rationale for a Definition of Communication," The Journal of Communication, X (September, 1969), pp. 115-124.

[13]Robert S. Goyer, "Communication, Communicative Process, Meaning: Toward A Unified Theory," The Journal of Communication, XX (March, 1970), pp. 4-16.

[14]James H. Platt, "What Do We Mean--'Communication'"? The Journal of Communication, V (Spring, 1955), pp. 21-26.

[15]Ronald F. Reid, Ed., Introduction To the Field of Speech (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman & Company, 1965).

[16]Keith Brooks, Ed., The Communicative Arts and Sciences of Speech (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1967).

[17]"The Field of Speech: Its Purposes and Scope in Education," Speech Teacher, XII (November, 1963), pp. 331-35.

[18]Henry L. Ewbank, et. al., "What Is Speech? A Symposium," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, XLI (February, 1955), pp. 143-53.

[19]Karl R. Wallace, "The Field of Speech, 1953: An Overview," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, XL (April, 1954), pp. 117-129.

[20]Speech Communication Association Convention Program: 58th Annual Meeting, Chicago, Ill., December 27-30, 1972, p. 21.

[21]For instance see: Speech Association of America Convention Program, Statler Hilton Hotel, Los Angeles, December 27-30, 1967, pp. 15-16.

[22]Borden, op. cit., p. 111.

[23]Borden, op. cit., p. 110.

[24]Franklin H. Knower, Table of Contents of the Quarterly Journal of Speech, Speech Monographs and The Speech Teacher, (New York: The Speech Association of America, 1965).

[25]Robert E. Dunham, L.S. Harms, and Richard B. Gregg, Index and Table of Contents of Southern Speech Journal, Western Speech Journal, Central States Speech Journal and Today's Speech, (New York: The Speech Association of America, 1966).

[26]Ronald J. Matlon and Irene R. Matlon, Table of Contents and Index of the Quarterly Journal of Speech, Speech Monographs, The Speech Teacher, Southern Speech Journal, Western Speech Journal, Central States Speech Journal and Today's Speech, (New York: Speech Communication Association, 1971).

[27]Kenneth D. Frandsen, Ed., Author and Key-Word Index, 1951-1968 (Lawrence, Kansas: The Allen Press, 1969).

[28]George A. Borden, Susan M. Jenkins, and John D. State, The Speech Communication Association Information Retrieval Thesaurus (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971).

[29]The Information Retrieval Committee of the SCA consisted of: Larry Barker, Ed Black, George Borden, Ned Bowman, Ken Frandsen, and Brad Lashbrook.

[30]Journals represented include: Quarterly Journal of Speech, Speech Monographs, Speech Teacher, Western Speech Journal, Central States Speech Journal, Southern Speech Journal, Today's Speech, Journal of Communication, and Philosophy and Rhetoric.

[31]For a more detailed explanation of the contents of the thesaurus, its construction and use, contact the authors at the Speech Department, Pennsylvania State University.

[32]See: The faceted version of the thesaurus by Borden, Jenkins and Stone, Computer Printout, 1972.

[33]This is a portion of the material contained in one of the overall facets. Any request for the information contained in the higher order (Cognitive Processes) would subsequently retrieve all articles indexed under subordinate terms as well.